

## State Commission

The Puerto Rico Commission for Volunteerism and Community Service administer 15 AmeriCorps programs and one AmeriCorps planning grant. The AmeriCorps programs address education, health futures, safeguarding the environment, providing disaster relief, and promoting civic engagement. During 2015, Puerto Rico suffered a severe drought, especially in the Northeast of the island. The drop in water levels at the island's two main reservoirs, Lake La Plata and Lake Carraizo, required the implementation of a rationing plan for municipalities that get their water from these reservoirs. In response to this emergency, First Lady Wilma Pastrana Jimenez led an effort with the Puerto Rico State Commission for Volunteerism and Community Service, more than 100 AmeriCorps members serving with the Department of Natural and Environmental Resources, and 50 community volunteers to begin implementing a plan for reforestation of watersheds in the country. This plan included dredging Lake La Plata to reduce sediment buildup and reforestation of watersheds to prevent sedimentation of waterways. More than 200 trees of native species and fruit trees were planted in the Wildlife Refuge Reservoir at Lake La Plata. This reforestation effort is expected to decrease erosion and sediment build-up in the lake.

## AmeriCorps State

The Sila M. Calderón Foundation and its Center for Puerto Rico programs offer individuals, women and community leaders the necessary training for the development and strengthening of entrepreneurial initiatives, contributing to the economic development of Puerto Rico. A total of 11 AmeriCorps members serve within the entrepreneurial training programs. Members collaborate with economically disadvantaged individuals and provide training, technical assistance, and other support for the development or strengthening of their business initiatives. The assistance offered to participants is essential for the application of the concepts discussed during workshops. With the assistance of the Center for Puerto Rico, program participant Victor Santanahe has forged links with local farmers to provide hives to aid in pollination, thus expanding the services he provides. Furthermore, he made a complete makeover of his brand, which after undergoing a marketing focus group was changed from Bee Buster Honey to the eco-friendly name of Bee Keeper Honey.

After graduating from the Capacity Building Program for the Development of Entrepreneurial/Community Initiatives in August 2015, participant Maggy Castro has slowly progressed in her desire to reinvent and promote her business idea directed towards the sales of baked goods. Ms. Castro also participated in the Entrepreneurial Impulse Program, geared towards improving and further developing graduates' business initiatives. As a result of her participation in the workshops and the support of AmeriCorps members, she developed ideas to improve her product. Through her interaction with AmeriCorps members and the technical support sessions, she realized there was a more marketable and cost-effective product she could develop.

## AmeriCorps VISTA

The Chana and Samuel Levis Foundation has successfully implemented an AmeriCorps VISTA program that has led to multiple outcomes including a new volunteer program with the University of Puerto Rico, increased volunteer engagement in schools; revamping of its webpage, more exposure and visibility in social media, and new and improved curricula better aligned with the Puerto Rico Department of Education's strategy. The AmeriCorps VISTAs have also developed more comprehensive community assessment tools based on social cartography methods in at least three target schools. The work of VISTA helped create a new school-based measurement and needs assessment strategies for teacher, students, and parents at the first after-school program. The new training offerings for parents within the target schools will strengthen school ecosystem involvement.

AmeriCorps VISTA members at the San Juan Bay Estuary Program helped design several projects around the San Juan Bay area, including new strategies to overcome poverty in the communities between the San Juan Bay and the Cucharillas Wetland. The program is used by more than 1,000 fishermen and produces close to 350,000 pounds of fish annually. Members served as leaders and helped design a community and multi-sector activity to plant red mangroves in La Esperanza Peninsula, located in a beautiful area of the San Juan Bay. The community is hoping to increase fish population and diversity in order to increase work. This is one of the many strategies being designed to help improve the ecosystems of the zone and strengthen eco-tourism and fishing activities in hopes of creating more job opportunities for the communities surrounding the San Juan Bay.

## Senior Corps Foster Grandparent Program

Esperanza para la Vejez Inc. currently engages 179 Foster Grandparent volunteers at 22 schools in the towns of Bayamon and Carolina. Foster Grandparents serve five hours daily. Last year, 223 Foster Grandparents were assigned to 19 elementary schools, supporting more than 281 students with tutoring, especially with reading skills. Twenty-two Foster Grandparents are serving in middle schools helping 32 students in different content areas.

## Senior Corps RSVP

The Gericola Corporation RSVP program engages 145 RSVP volunteers whose services benefit many citizens, including veterans. Volunteers serve in homeless shelters and support the elderly among other duties. These services are offered at eight different stations through the municipalities of Las Piedras, Humacao, and Yabucoa, an area of more than 135,000 inhabitants.

## Senior Corps Senior Companion Program

The Ombudsman Office for the Elderly is the government office responsible for serving and protecting people over sixty years old. It has sponsored the Senior Companion Program for more than twenty-five years. The organization has given a sense of purpose to active elderly population interested in serving their peers in need. Nearly 100 Senior Companion volunteers provide supportive services and companionship in the region of Arecibo, Bayamón, Carolina, Cayey, Isabela, Mayagüez, Ponce, Río Grande, and San Juan, an area with more than 1.2 million inhabitants. As of October 2015, Senior Companions served more than 89,282 volunteer hours, impacting more than 200 clients and their families.